THOUGHTS ON THE GITA

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

ADVAITA ASHRAMA

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PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

During his sojourn in Calcutta in 1897, Swami Vivekananda used to stay for the most part at the Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission, located then at Alambazar. During this time, several young men, who had been preparing themselves for some time previously, gathered round him and took the vows of Brahmacharya and Sannyasa, and Swamiji began to train them for future work, by holding classes on the Gita and Vedanta, and initiating them into the practices of meditation. In one of these classes he talked eloquently in Bengali on the Gita. The first chapter, *Thoughts on the Gita,* is a translation of the summary of the discourse as it was entered in the Math diary. The passages appended to this chapter, and those at the end of the last one are from different volumes of *Complete Works.* The next four chapters are reproduced from the *Vedanta and the West.* These were originally delivered in San Francisco in 1900, and recorded by Ida Ansell in shorthand. Long after, a few months before her passing away on January 31, 1955, she transcribed these for publication. "In the interest of absolute faithfulness, when transcribing them, no alterations were made in the somewhat incomplete notes Ida Ansell was able to take down. Where omissions were left because of some obscurity, these in the printed version have been indicated by three dots. Any matter added for purposes of clarification has been placed in square brackets" (Editor, *Vedanta and the West*). In spite of these shortcomings the speeches are charming and inspiring enough to be presented here. And the last chapter is based on a talk Swamiji gave at a meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission held on March 20, 1898, at 57 Ramkanta Bose Street, Calcutta.

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THOUGHTS ON THE GITA

The book known as the Gita forms a part of the Mahabharata. To understand the Gita properly, it is very important to know several things. First, whether it formed a part of the Mahabharata, i.e. whether the authorship attributed to Veda-Vyasa was true, or if it was merely interpolated within the great epic; secondly, whether there was any historical personality of the name of Krishna; thirdly, whether the great war of Kurukshetra as mentioned in the Gita actually took place; and fourthly, whether Arjuna and others were real historical persons.

Now in the first place, let us see what grounds there are for such inquiry. We know that there were many who went by the name of Veda-Vyasa; and among them who was the real author of the Gita—the Badarayana Vyasa or Dvaipayana Vyasa? "Vyasa" was only a title. Any one who composed a new Purana was known by the name of Vyasa, like the word Vikramaditya, which was also a general name. Another point is, the book Gita had not been much known to the generality of people, before Shankaracharya made it famous by writing his great commentary on it. Long before that, there was current, according to many, the commentary on it by Bodhayana. If this could be proved, it would go a long way, no doubt, to establish the antiquity of the Gita and the authorship of Vyasa. But the Bodhayana-Bhashya on the Vedanta-Sutras—from which Ramanuja compiled his Shri-Bhashya, which Shankaracharya mentions and even quotes in part here and there in his own commentary, and which was so greatly discussed by the Swami Dayananda—not a copy even of that Bodhayana-Bhashya could I find while travelling throughout India. It is said that even Ramanuja compiled his Bhashya from a worm-eaten manuscript which he happened to find. When even this great Bodhayana-Bhashya on the Vedanta-Sutras is so much enshrouded in the darkness of uncertainty, it is simply useless to try to establish the existence of the Bodhayana-Bhashya on the Gita. Some infer that Shankaracharya was the author of the Gita, and that it was he who foisted it into the body of the Mahabharata.

Then as to the second point in question, much doubt exists about the personality of Krishna. In one place in the Chhandogya Upanishad we find mention of Krishna, the son of Devaki, who received spiritual instruction from one Ghora, a Yogi. In the Mahabharata, Krishna is the king of Dwaraka; and in the

Vishnu Purana we find a description of Krishna playing with the Gopis. Again in the Bhagavata, the account of his Rasalila is detailed at length. In very ancient times in our country, there was in vogue an Utsava (festival) called Madanotsava (celebration in honour of Cupid). That very thing was transformed into Dola and thrust upon the shoulders of Krishna. Who can be so bold as to assert that the Rasalila and other things connected with him were not similarly fastened upon him? In ancient times, there was very little tendency in our country to find out truths by historical research. So any one could say what he thought best without substantiating it with proper facts and evidence. Another thing: in those ancient times there was very little hankering after name and fame in men. So it often happened that one man composed a book and made it pass current in the name of his Guru or of someone else. In such cases it is very hazardous for the investigator of historical facts to get at the truth. In ancient times, they had no knowledge whatever of geography—imagination ran riot. And so we meet with such fantastic creations of the brain, as sweet-ocean, milk-ocean, clarified-butter-ocean, curd-ocean, etc! In the Puranas, we find one living ten thousand years, another a hundred thousand years! But the Vedas say, शतायुर्वै पुरुषः—"Man lives a hundred years." Whom shall we follow here? So, to reach a correct conclusion in the case of Krishna is well-nigh impossible.

It is human nature to build round the real character of a great man all sorts of imaginary superhuman attributes. As regards Krishna the same must have happened, but it seems quite probable that he was a king. Quite probable I say, because in ancient times in our country it was chiefly the kings who exerted themselves most in the preaching of Brahma-Jnana. Another point to be especially noted here is, that whoever might have been the author of the Gita, we find its teachings the same as those in the whole of the Mahabharata. From this we can safely infer that in the age of the Mahabharata some great man arose and preached the Brahma-Jnana in this new garb to the then existing society. Another fact comes to the fore that in the olden days, as one sect after another arose, there also came into existence and use among them, one new scripture or another. It happened, too, that in the lapse of time both the sect and its scripture died out, or the sect ceased to exist but its scripture remained. Similarly it was quite probable that the Gita was the scripture of such a sect, which had embodied its high and noble ideas in this sacred book.

Now to the third point, bearing on the subject of the Kurukshetra War, no special evidence in support of it can be adduced. But there is no doubt that there was a war fought between the Kurus and the Panchalas. Another thing: how could there be so much discussion about Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga on the battlefield, where the huge army stood in battle array ready to fight, just waiting for the last signal? And was any shorthand writer present there to note down every word spoken between Krishna and Arjuna, in the din and turmoil of the battle-field ? According to some, this Kurukshetra War is only an allegory. When we sum up its esoteric significance, it means the war which is constantly going on within man between the tendencies of good and evil. This meaning, too, may not be irrational.

About the fourth point, there is enough ground of doubt as regards the historicity of Arjuna and others, and it is this: Shatapatha Brahmana is a very ancient book. In it are mentioned somewhere all the names of those who were the performers of the Ashvamedha Yajna but in those places there is not only no mention, but no hint even, of the names of Arjuna and others, though it speaks of Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, who was a grandson of Arjuna. Yet in the Mahabharata and other books it is stated that Yudhishthira, Arjuna, and others celebrated the Ashvamedha sacrifice.

One thing should be especially remembered here, that there is no connection between these historical researches and our real aim, which is, the knowledge that leads to the acquirement of Dharma. Even if the historicity of the whole thing is proved to be absolutely false today, it will not in the least be any loss to us. "Then what is the use of so much historical research?" —you may ask. It has its use because we have to get at the truth; it will not do for us to remain bound by wrong ideas born of ignorance. In this country people think very little of the importance of such inquiries. Many of the sects believe that in order to preach a good thing which may be beneficial to many, there is no harm in telling an untruth, if that helps such preaching, or in other words, the end justifies the means. Hence we find many of our Tantras beginning with "Mahadeva said to Parvati". But our duty should be to convince ourselves of the truth, to believe in truth only. Such is the power of superstition, or faith in old traditions without inquiry into its truth, that it keeps men bound hand and foot, so much so, that even Jesus the Christ, Mohammed, and other great men believed in many such superstitions and could not shake them off. You have to keep your eye always fixed on truth only, and shun all superstitions completely.

Now let us see what there is in the Gita. If we study the Upanishads, we notice, in wandering through the mazes of many irrelevant subjects, the sudden introduction of the discussion of a great truth, just as in the midst of a huge wilderness a traveller unexpectedly comes across here and there an exquisitely beautiful rose, with its leaves, thorns, roots, all entangled. Compared with that, the Gita is like these truths beautifully arranged together in their proper places—like a fine garland or a bouquet of the choicest flowers. The Upanishads deal elaborately with Shraddha (faith) in many places, but hardly mention Bhakti. In the Gita, on the other hand, the subject of Bhakti is not only again and again dealt with, but in it, the innate spirit of Bhakti has attained its culmination.

Now let us see some of the main points discussed in the Gita. Wherein lies the originality of the Gita, which distinguishes it from all preceding scriptures? It is this: though before its advent, Yoga, Jnana, Bhakti, etc., had each its strong adherents, they all quarrelled among themselves, each claiming superiority for his own chosen path; no one ever tried to seek for reconciliation among these different paths. It was the author of the Gita who for the first time tried to harmonise these. He took the best from what all the sects then existing had to offer, and threaded them in the Gita. But even where Krishna failed to show a complete reconciliation (Samanvaya) among these warring sects, it was fully accomplished by Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in this nineteenth century.

The next is Nishkama Karma or work without desire or attachment. People nowadays understand what is meant by this in various ways. Some say, what is implied by being unattached is to become purposeless. If that were its real meaning then heartless brutes and the walls would be the best exponents of the performance of Nishkama Karma. Many others, again, give the example of Janaka,[1] and wish themselves to be equally recognised as past masters in the practice of Nishkama Karma ! Janaka did not acquire that distinction by bringing forth children, but these people all want to be Janakas, with the sole qualification of being the fathers of a brood of children ! No ! The true Nishkama Karmi (performer of work without desire) is neither to be like a brute, nor to be inert, nor heartless. He is not

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[1] Janaka was the name of an enlightened king who attained liberation while still ruling a kingdom. The word also means "father".—Ed.

Tamasika[1] but of pure Sattva.[2] His heart is so full of love and sympathy, that he can embrace the whole world with his love. The world at large cannot generally comprehend his all-embracing love and sympathy.

The reconciliation of the different paths of Dharma, and work without desire or attachment—these are the two special characteristics of the Gita.

Let us now read a little from the second chapter.

संजय उवाच ।
तं तथा कृपयाविष्टमश्रुपूर्णाकुलेक्षणम् ।
विषीदन्तमिदं वाक्यमुवाच मधुसूदनः ॥१॥
श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् ।
अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन ॥२॥
क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परंतप ॥३॥

"Sanjaya said:

"To him who was thus overwhelmed with

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[1] Under the influence of the quality of Tamas—ignorance, inertness, inactivity.

[2] Enlightenment, Calmness, etc.

pity and sorrowing, and whose eyes were dimmed with tears, Madhusudana spoke these words:

"The Blessed Lord said:

" 'In such a strait, whence comes upon thee, O Arjuna, this dejection, un-Arya-like, disgraceful, and contrary to the attainment of heaven?

" 'Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha! Ill doth it become thee. Cast off this mean faint-heartedness and arise, O scorcher of thine enemies!' "

In the Shlokas beginning with "तं तथा कृपयाविष्टं" —how poetically, how beautifully has Arjuna's real position been painted! Then Shri Krishna advises Arjuna. And in the words क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ etc., why is he goading Arjuna to fight? Because it was not that the disinclination of Arjuna to fight arose out of the overwhelming predominance of pure Sattva Guna (quality); it was all Tamas that brought on this unwillingness. The nature of a man of Sattva Guna is, that he is equally calm in all situations in life—whether it be prosperity or adversity. But Arjuna was afraid, he was overwhelmed with pity. That he had the instinct and the inclination to fight is proved by the simple fact, that he came to the battle-field with no other purpose than that. Frequently in our lives also such things are seen to happen. Many people think they are Sattvika by nature, but they are really nothing but Tamasika. Many living in an uncleanly way regard themselves as Paramahamsas[1]! Why? Because the Shastras (scriptures) say that Paramahamsas live like one inert, or mad, or like an unclean spirit. Paramahamsas are compared to children, but here it should be understood that the comparison is one-sided. The Paramahamsa and the child are not one and non-different. They only appear similar, being the two extreme poles, as it were. One has reached to a state beyond Jnana, and the other has not got even an inkling of Jnana. The quickest and the lowest vibrations of light are both beyond the range of our ordinary vision; but in the one it is intense heat, and in the other it may be said to be almost without any heat. So it is with the opposite qualities of Sattva and Tamas. They seem in some respects no doubt to be the same, but there is a world of difference between them. The Tamoguna loves very much to array itself in the garb of the Sattva. Here, in Arjuna, the mighty warrior, it has come under the guise of Daya (pity)!

In order to remove this delusion which had overtaken Arjuna, what did the Bhagavan (Lord) say? As I always preach that you should not decry a man by calling him a sinner but that you should draw his attention to the omnipotent power that is in him, in the same way does the Bhagavan speak to Arjuna. "नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते"—It doth not befit thee. Thou art that Atman imperishable, beyond all evil. Having forgotten thy real nature, thou hast, by thinking thyself a sinner, as one afflicted with bodily evils and mental grief—thou hast made thyself so—this doth not befit thee. So says the Bhagavan: "क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ"—Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha. There is in the world, neither sin nor misery, neither disease nor grief; if there is anything in the world which can be called sin, it is this—"fear"; know that any work which brings out the latent power in thee, is Punya (virtue); and that which makes thy body and mind weak is, verily, sin. Shake off this faint-heartedness! "क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ Thou art a hero, a Vira; "this is unbecoming of thee." If you, my sons, can proclaim this message to the world क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते—then all this disease, grief, sin, and sorrow will vanish from off the face of the earth in three days. All these ideas of weakness will be nowhere. Now it is everywhere—this current of the vibration of fear. Reverse the current; bring in the opposite vibration, and behold the magic transformation; Thou art omnipotent—

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[1] Monks of the highest order.

go, go to the mouth of the cannon, fear not. Hate not the most abject sinner, look not to his exterior. Turn thy gaze inward, where resides the Paramatman (Supreme Self). Proclaim to the whole world with trumpet voice, "There is no sin in thee, there is no misery in thee; thou art the reservoir of omnipotent power. Arise, awake, and manifest the Divinity within!"

If one reads this one Shloka—'क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते। क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परंतप ॥' —one gets all the merits of reading the entire Gita; for in this one Shloka lies embedded the whole Message of the Gita.

(*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, IV. 102-10)

If there is anything in the Gita that I like, it is these two verses, coming out strong as the very gist, the very essence of Krishna's teaching —"He who sees the Supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings, the Imperishable in things that perish, he sees indeed. For seeing the Lord as the same, everywhere present, he does not destroy the Self by the self, and thus he goes to the highest goal."

(*Complete Works*, III, 193-94)

Krishna, the "Lord of souls", talks to Arjuna, or Gudakesha, the "lord of sleep" (he who has conquered sleep). The "field of virtue" (the battle-field) is this world; the five brothers (representing righteousness) fight the hundred other brothers (all that we love and have to contend against); the most heroic brother, Arjuna (the awakened soul), is the general. We have to fight all sense-delights, the things to which we are most attached, to kill them. We have to stand alone; we are Brahman, all other ideas must be merged in this one.

Krishna did everything but without any attachment; he was in the world, but not of it. "Do all work, but without attachment; work for work's sake, never for yourself."

(*Complete Works*, VII. 19)

The teachings of Krishna as taught by the Gita are the grandest the world has ever known. He who wrote that wonderful poem was one of those rare souls whose lives send a wave of regeneration through the world. The human race will never again see such a brain as his who wrote the Gita.

(*Complete Works*, VII. 22)

This great poem is held to be the crown jewel of all Indian literature. It is a kind of commentary on the Vedas. It shows us that our battle for spirituality must be fought out in this life; so we must not flee from it, but rather compel it to give us all that it holds. As the Gita typifies this struggle for higher things, it is highly poetical to lay the scene in the battle-field. Krishna in the guise of a charioteer to Arjuna, leader of one of the opposing armies, urges him not to be sorrowful, not to fear death, since he knows he is immortal, that nothing which changes can be in the *real* nature of man. Through chapter after chapter, Krishna teaches the higher truths of philosophy and religion to Arjuna. It is these teachings which make this poem so wonderful; practically the whole of the Vedanta philosophy is included in them.

(*Complete Works*, VIII. 8-9)

Wisdom can be practised even on a battle-field. The Gita was preached so. There are three states of mind; the active, the passive, and the serene. The passive state is characterized by slow vibrations; the active, by quick vibrations, and the serene, by the most intense vibrations of all. Know that the soul is sitting in the chariot. The body is the chariot; the outer senses are the horses; and the mind the reins; and the intellect the charioteer. So man crosses the ocean of Maya. He goes beyond. He reaches

God. When a man is under the control of his senses, he is of this world. When he has controlled the senses, he has renounced.

Even forgiveness, if weak and passive, is not true: fight is better. *Forgive* when you could bring legions of angels to the victory. Krishna, the charioteer of Arjuna, hears him say, "Let us forgive our enemies," and answers, "You speak the words of wise men, but you are not a wise man, but a coward." As a lotus-leaf. living in the water yet untouched by it, so should the soul be in the world. This is a battle-field, fight your way out. Life in this world is an attempt to see God. Make your life a manifestation of will strengthened by renunciation.

(*Complete Works,* VIII. 227)

KRISHNA

(Delivered in California, on April 1, 1900)

Almost the same circumstances which gave birth to Buddhism in India surrounded the rise of Krishna. Not only this, the events of that day we find happening in our own times.

There is a certain ideal. At the same time there must always be a large majority of the human race who cannot come up to the ideal, not even intellectually. . . . The strong ones carry it out and many times have no sympathy for the weak. The weak to the strong are only beggars. The strong ones march ahead. . . . Of course, we see at once that the highest position to take is to be sympathetic and helpful to those who are weak. But then, in many cases the philosopher bars the way to our being sympathetic. If we go by the theory that the whole of this infinite life has to be determined by the few years' existence here and now, . . . then it is very hopeless for us, . . . and we have no time to look back upon those who are weak. But if these are not the conditions—if the world is only one of the many schools through which we have to pass, if the eternal life is to be moulded and fashioned and guided by the eternal law: and eternal law, eternal chances await everyone—then we need not be in a hurry. We have time to sympathise to look around, stretch out a helping hand to the weak and bring them up.

With Buddhism we have two words in Sanskrit: one is translated religion, the other, a sect. It is the most curious fact that the disciples and descendants of Krishna have no name for their religion, [although] foreigners call it Hinduism or Brahminism. There is one religion, and there are many sects. The moment you give it a name, individualise it and separate it from the rest, it is a sect, no more a religion. A sect [proclaims] its own truth and declares that there is no truth anywhere else. Religion believes that there has been, and still is, one religion in the world. There never were two religions. It is the same religion [presenting] different aspects in different places. The task is to conceive the proper understanding of the goal and scope of humanity.

This was the great work of Krishna: to clear our eyes and make us look with broader vision upon humanity in its march upward and onward. His was the first heart that was large enough to see truth in all, his the first lips that uttered beautiful words for each and all.

This Krishna preceded Buddha by some thousand years. . . . A great many people do not believe that he ever existed. Some believe that [the worship of Krishna grew out of] the old sun worship. There seem to be several Krishnas: one was mentioned in the Upanishads, another was a king, another a general. All have been lumped into one Krishna. It does not matter much. The fact is, some individual comes who is unique in spirituality. Then all sorts of legends are invented around him. But all the Bibles and stories which come to be cast upon this one person have to be recast in [the mould of] his character. All the stories of the New Testament have to be modelled upon the accepted life [and] character of Christ. In all of the Indian stories about Buddha the one central note of that whole life is kept up—sacrifice for others.

In Krishna we find . . . two ideas supreme in his message: The first is the harmony of different ideas; the second is non-attachment. A man can attain to perfection, the highest goal, sitting on a throne, commanding armies, working out big plans for nations. In fact, Krishna's great sermon was preached on the battle-field.

Krishna saw plainly through the vanity of all the mummeries, mockeries, and ceremonials of the old priests; and yet he saw some good in them.

If you are a strong man, very good! But do not curse others who are not strong enough for you. . . . Everyone says, "Woe unto you people!" Who says, "Woe unto me that I cannot help you?" The people are doing all right to the best of their ability and means and knowledge. Woe unto me that I cannot lift them to where I am!

So the ceremonials, worship of gods, and myths, are all right, Krishna says. . . . Why? Because they all lead to the same goal. Ceremonies, books, and forms—all these are links in the chain. Get hold! That is the one thing. If you are sincere and have really got hold of one link, do not let go; the rest is bound to come. [But people] do not get hold. They spend the time quarrelling and determining what they should get hold of and do not get hold of anything. . . . We are always after truth, but never want to get it. We simply want the pleasure to go about and ask. We have a lot of energy and spend it that way. That is why Krishna says: Get hold of any one of these chains that are stretched out from the common centre. No one step is greater than another. . . . Blame no view of religion so far as it is sincere. Hold on to one of these links, and it will pull you to the centre. Your heart itself will teach all the rest. The teacher within will teach all the creeds, all the philosophies. . . .

Krishna talks of himself as God, as Christ does. He sees the Deity in himself. And he says, "None can go a day out of my path. All have to come to me. Whosoever wants to worship in whatsoever form, I give him faith in that form, and through that I meet him. . . ."[1] His heart is all for the masses.

Independent, Krishna stands out. The very boldness of it frightens us. We depend upon everything, . . . upon a few good words, upon circumstances. When the soul wants to depend upon nothing, not even upon life, that is the height of philosophy, the height of manhood. Worship leads to the same goal. Krishna lays great stress upon worship. Worship God!

Various sorts of worship we see in this world. The sick man is very worshipful to God. . . . There is the man who loses his fortune; he also prays very much, to get money. The highest worship is that of the man who loves God for God's sake. [The question may be asked:] "Why should there be so much sorrow if there is a God?" The worshipper replies: ". . . There is misery in the world [but] because of that I do not cease to love God. I do not worship Him to take away my [misery]. I love Him because He is love itself." The other [types of worship] are lower-grade; but Krishna has no condemnation for anything. It is better to do something than to stand still. The man who begins to worship God will grow by degrees and begin to love God for love's sake. . . .

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[1] Gita, IV. 12.

How to attain purity living this life? Shall we all go to the forest caves? What good would it do? If the mind is not under control, it is no use living in a cave because the same mind will bring all disturbances there. We will find twenty devils in the cave because all the devils are in the mind. If the mind is under control, we can have the cave anywhere, wherever we are.

It is our own mental attitude which makes the world what it is for us. Our thoughts make things beautiful, our thoughts make things ugly. The whole world is in our own minds. Learn to see things in the proper light. First, believe in this world—that there is meaning behind everything. Everything in the world is good, is holy and beautiful. If you see something evil, think that you are not understanding it in the right light. Throw the burden on yourselves! . . . Whenever we are tempted to say that the world is going to the dogs, we ought to analyse ourselves, and we shall find that we have lost the faculty of seeing things as they are.

Work day and night! "Behold, I am the Lord of the Universe. I have no duty. Every duty is bondage. But I work for work's sake If I ceased to work for a minute, [there would be chaos]."[1] So do thou work, without any idea of duty. . . .

This world is a play. You are His playmates. Go on and work, without any sorrow, without any misery! See His play in the slums, in the saloons! Work to lift people! Not that they are vile or degraded; Krishna does not say that.

Do you know why so little good work is done? My lady goes to the slums. . . . She gives a few ducats and says, "My poor men, take that and be happy!" . . . Or my fine woman, walking through the street, sees a poor fellow and throws him five cents. Think of the blasphemy of it! Blessed are we that the Lord has given us His teaching in your own Testament. Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It is blasphemy to think that you can help anyone. First root out this idea of helping, and then go to worship. God's children are your Master's children. [And children are but different forms of the father.]

[1] Gita, III. 22-23.

You are His servant. . . . Serve the living God ! God comes to you in the blind, in the halt, in the poor, in the weak, in the diabolical. What a glorious chance for you to worship ! The moment you think you are "helping", you undo the whole thing and degrade yourself. Knowing this, work. "What follows?" you say. You do not get that heartbreak, that awful misery. . . . Then work is no more slavery. It becomes a play, and joy itself. . . . Work ! Be unattached ! That is the whole secret. If you get attached, you become miserable. . . .

With everything we do in life we identify ourselves. Here is a man who says harsh words to me. I feel anger coming on me. In a few seconds anger and I are one, and then comes misery. Attach yourselves to the Lord and to nothing else, because everything else is unreal. Attachment to the unreal will bring misery. There is only one Existence that is real, only one Life in which there is neither object nor [subject]. . . .

But unattached love will not hurt you. Do anything—marry, have children. . . . Do anything you like—nothing will hurt you. Do nothing with the idea of "mine". Duty for duty's sake ; work for work's sake. What is that to you ? You stand aside.

When we come to that non-attachment, then we can understand the marvellous mystery of the universe; how it is intense activity and vibration, and at the same time the intensest peace and calm; how it is work every moment and rest every moment. That is the mystery of the universe—the impersonal and personal in one, the infinite and finite in one. Then we shall find the secret. "He who finds in the midst of intense activity the greatest rest, and in the midst of the greatest rest intense activity, he has become a Yogi."[1] He alone is a real worker, none else. We do a little work and break ourselves. Why? We become attached to that work. If we do not become attached, side by side with it we have infinite rest. . . .

How hard it is to arrive at this sort of non-attachment! Therefore Krishna shows us the lower ways and methods. The easiest way for everyone is to do [his or her] work and not take the results. It is our desire that binds us. If we take the results of actions, whether good or evil, we will have to bear them. But if we work, not for ourselves, but all for the glory of the Lord, the results will take care of themselves. "To work you have the right, but not to the fruits thereof."[2] The soldier works for no results. He does his duty. If defeat comes, it belongs to the general, not to the soldier. We do our duty for love's sake—love for the general, love for the Lord. . . .

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[1] Gita, IV. 18.

[2] Gita, II. 47.

If you are strong, take up the Vedanta philosophy and be independent. If you cannot do that, worship God; if not, worship some image. If you lack strength even to do that, do some good works without the idea of gain. Offer everything you have unto the service of the Lord. Fight on! "Leaves and water and one flower—whosoever lays anything on my altar. I receive it with equal delight."[1] If you cannot do anything, not a single good work, then take refuge [in the Lord]. "The Lord resides within the heart of the beings, making them turn upon His wheel. Do thou with all thy soul and heart take refuge in Him. . . ."[2]

These are some of the general ideas that Krishna preached on this idea of love [in the Gita]. There are [in] other great books, sermons on love—as with Buddha, as with Jesus. . . .

A few words about the life of Krishna. There is a great deal of similarity between the lives of Jesus and Krishna. A discussion is going on as to which borrowed of the other. There was the tyrannical king in both places. Both were born in a manger. The parents were bound in both cases. Both were saved by angels. In both cases all the boys born that year were killed. The childhood is the same. . . . Again, in the end, both were killed. Krishna was killed by accident; he took the man who killed him to heaven. Christ was killed, and blessed the robber and took him to heaven.

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[1] Gita, IX. 26.

[2] Ibid., XVIII. 61.

There are a great many similarities in the teachings of the New Testament and the Gita. The human thought goes the same way. . . . I will find you the answer in the words of Krishna himself: "Whenever virtue subsides and irreligion prevails, I come down. Again and again I come. Therefore whenever thou seest a great soul struggling to uplift mankind, know that I am come, and worship. . . ."[1]

At the same time, if he comes as Jesus or as Buddha, why is there so much schism? The preachings must be followed! A Hindu devotee would say: It is God himself who became Christ and Krishna and Buddha and all these [great teachers]. A Hindu philosopher would say: these are the great souls; they are already free. And though free, they refuse to accept their liberation while the whole world is suffering. They come again and again, take a human embodiment and help mankind. They know from their childhood what they are and what they come for. . . . They do not come through bondage like we do. . . . They come out of their own free will, and cannot help having tremendous spiritual power. We cannot resist it. The vast mass of mankind is dragged into the whirlpool of spirituality, and the vibration goes on and on because one of these [great souls] gives a push. So it continues until all mankind is liberated and the play of this planet is finished.

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[1] Gita, IV. 8; X. 41.

Glory unto the great souls whose lives we have been studying ! They are the living gods of the world. They are the persons whom we ought to worship. If He comes to me, I can only recognise Him if He takes a human form. He is everywhere, but do we see Him ? We can only see Him if He takes the limitation of man. . . . If men and . . . animals are manifestations of God, these teachers of mankind are leaders, are Gurus. Therefore, salutations unto you, whose footstool is worshipped by angels ! Salutations unto you leaders of the human race ! Salutations unto you great teachers ! You leaders have our salutations for ever and ever !

(*Complete Works,* I. 437-45)

THE GITA I

(Delivered in San Francisco, on May 26, 1900)

To understand the Gita requires its historical background. The Gita is a commentary on the Upanishads. The Upanishads are the Bible of India. They occupy the same place as the New Testament does. There are [more than] a hundred books comprising the Upanishads, some very small and some big, each a separate treatise. The Upanishads do not reveal the life of any teacher, but simply teach principles. They are [as it were] shorthand notes taken down of discussions in [learned assemblies], generally in the courts of kings. The word Upanishad may mean "sittings" [or "sitting near a teacher"]. Those of you who may have studied some of the Upanishads can understand how they are condensed shorthand sketches. After long discussions had been held, they were taken down, possibly from memory. The difficulty is that you get very little of the background. Only the luminous points are mentioned there. The origin of ancient Sanskrit is 5,000 B.C.; the Upanishads [are at least] two thousand years before that. Nobody knows [exactly] how old they are. The Gita takes the ideas of the Upanishads and in [some] cases the very words. They are strung together with the idea of bringing out, in a compact, condensed, and systematic form, the whole subject the Upanishads deal with.

The [original] scriptures of the Hindus are called the Vedas. They were so vast—the mass of writings—that if the texts alone were brought here, this room would not contain them. Many of them are lost. They were divided into branches, each branch put into the head of certain priests and kept alive by memory. Such men still exist. They will repeat book after book of the Vedas without missing a single intonation. The larger portion of the Vedas has disappeared. The small portion left makes a whole library by itself. The oldest of these contains the hymns of the Rig-Veda. It is the aim of the modern scholar to restore [the sequence of the Vedic compositions]. The old, orthodox idea is quite different as your orthodox idea of the Bible is quite different from the modern scholar's. The Vedas are divided into two portions: one the Upanishads, the philosophical portion, the other the work portion.

We will try to give a little idea of the work portion. It consists of rituals and hymns, various hymns addressed to various gods. The ritual portion is composed of ceremonies, some of them very elaborate. A great many priests are required. The priestly function became a science by itself, owing to the elaboration of the ceremonials. Gradually the popular idea of veneration grew round these hymns and rituals. The gods disappeared and in their place were left the rituals. That was the curious development in India. The orthodox Hindu [the Mimamsaka] does not believe in gods, the unorthodox believe in them. If you ask the orthodox Hindu what the meaning is of these gods in the Vedas, [he will not be able to give any satisfactory answer]. The priests sing these hymns and pour libations and offerings into the fire. When you ask the orthodox Hindu the meaning of this, he says that words have the power to produce certain effects. That is all. There is all the natural and supernatural power that ever existed. The Vedas are simply words that have the mystical power to produce effects if the sound intonation is right. If one sound is wrong it will not do. Each one must be perfect. [Thus], what in other religions is called prayer disappeared and the Vedas became the gods. So you see the tremendous importance that was attached to the words of the Vedas. These are the eternal words out of which the whole universe has been produced. There cannot be any thought without the word. Thus whatever there is in this world is the manifestation of thought, and thought can only manifest itself through words. This mass of words by which the unmanifested thought becomes manifest, that is what is meant by the Vedas. It follows that the external existence of everything [depends on the Vedas for thought] does not exist without the word. If the word "horse" did not exist, none could think of a horse. [So] there must be [an intimate relation between] thought, word, and the external object. What are these words [in reality] ? The Vedas. They do not call it Sanskrit language at all. It is Vedic language, a divine language. Sanskrit is a degenerate form. So are all other languages. There is no language older than Vedic. You may ask, "Who wrote the Vedas?" They were not written. The words are the Vedas. A word is Veda, if I can pronounce it rightly. Then it will immediately produce the [desired] effect.

This mass of Vedas eternally exists and all the world is the manifestation of this mass of words. Then when the cycle ends, all this manifestation of energy becomes finer and finer, becomes only words, then thought. In the next cycle, first the thought changes into words and then out of those words [the whole universe] is produced. If there is something here that is not in the Vedas, that is your delusion. It does not exist.

[Numerous] books upon that subject alone defend the Vedas. If you tell [their authors] that the Vedas must have been pronounced by men first, [they will simply laugh]. You never heard of any [man uttering them for the first time]. Take Buddha's words. There is a tradition that he lived and spoke these words [many times before]. If the Christian stands up and says, "My religion is a historical religion and therefore yours is wrong and ours is true," [the Mimamsaka replies], "Yours being historical, you confess that a man invented it nineteen hundred years ago. That which is true must be infinite and eternal. That is the one test of truth. It never decays, it is always the same. You confess your religion was created by such-and-such a man. The Vedas were not. By no prophets or anything. . . . Only infinite words, infinite by their very nature, from which the whole universe comes and goes." In the abstract it is perfectly correct. . . . The sound must be the beginning of creation. There must be germ sounds like germ plasm. There cannot be any ideas without the words. . . . Wherever there are sensations, ideas, emotions, there must be words. The difficulty is when they say that these four books are the Vedas and nothing else.

[Then] the Buddhist will stand up and say, "Ours are Vedas. They were revealed to us later on." That cannot be. Nature does not go on in that way. Nature does not manifest her laws bit by bit, an inch of gravitation to day and [another inch] tomorrow. No, every law is complete. There is no evolution in law at all. It is [given] once and for ever. It is all nonsense, this "new religion and better inspiration," and all that. It means nothing. There may be a hundred thousand laws and man may know only a few today. We discover them—that is all. Those old priests with their tremendous [claims about eternal words], having dethroned the gods, took the place of the gods. [They said], "You do not understand the power of words. We know how to use them. We are the living gods of the world. Pay us ; we will manipulate the words, and you will get what you want. Can you pronounce the words yourself? You cannot, for, mind you, one mistake will produce the opposite effect. You want to be rich, handsome, have a long life, a fine husband?" Only pay the priest and keep quiet!

Yet there is another side. The ideal of the first part of the Vedas is entirely different from the ideal of the other part, the Upanishads. The ideal of the first part coincides with [that of] all other religions of the world except the

Vedanta. The ideal is enjoyment here and hereafter—man and wife, husband and children. Pay your dollar, and the priest will give you a certificate and you will have a happy time afterwards in heaven. You will find all your people there and have this merry-go-round without end. No tears, no weeping—only laughing. No stomachache, but yet eating. No headache, but yet [parties]. That, considered the priests, was the highest goal of man.

There is another idea in this philosophy which is according to your modern ideas. Man is a slave of nature, and slave eternally he has got to remain. We call it Karma. Karma means law, and it applies everywhere. Everything is bound by Karma. "Is there no way out?" "No! Remain slave all through the years—fine slaves. We will manipulate the words so that you will only have the good and not the bad side of all—if you will pay [us] enough." That was the ideal of [the Mimamsakas]. These are the ideals which are popular throughout the ages. The vast mass of mankind are never thinkers. Even if they try to think, the [effect of the] vast mass of superstitions on them is terrible. The moment they weaken, one blow comes, and the backbone breaks into twenty pieces. They can only be moved by lures and threats. They can never move of their own accord. They must be frightened, horrified, or terrorised, and they are your slaves for ever. They have nothing else to do but to pay and obey. Everything else is done by the priest. . . . How much easier religion becomes! You see, you have nothing to do. Go home and sit quietly. Somebody is doing the whole thing for you. Poor, poor animals!

Side by side, there was the other system. The Upanishads are diametrically opposite in all their conclusions. First of all, the Upanishads believe in God, the creator of the universe, its ruler. You find later on [the idea of a benign Providence]. It is an entirely opposite [conception]. Now, although we hear the priest, the ideal is much more subtle. Instead of many gods they made one God.

The second idea, that you are all bound by the law of Karma, the Upanishads admit, but they declare the way out. The goal of man is to go beyond law. And enjoyment can never be the goal, because enjoyment can only be in nature.

In the third place, the Upanishads condemn all the sacrifices and say that is mummery. That may give you all you want, but it is not desirable, for the more you get, the more you [want], and you run round and round in a circle eternally, never getting to the end—

enjoying and weeping. Such a thing as eternal happiness is impossible anywhere. It is only a child's dream. The same energy becomes joy and sorrow.

I have changed my psychology a bit today. I have found the most curious fact. You have a certain idea and you do not want to have it, and you think of something else, and the idea you want to suppress is entirely suppressed. What is that idea? I saw it come out in fifteen minutes. It came out and staggered me. It was strong, and it came in such a violent and terrible fashion [that] I thought: here was a madman. And when it was over, all that had happened [was a suppression of the previous emotion]. What came out? It was my own bad impression which had to be worked out. "Nature will have her way. What can suppression do?"[1] That is a terrible [statement] in the Gita. It seems it may be a vain struggle after all. You may have a hundred thousand [urges competing] at the same time. You may repress [them], but the moment the spring rebounds, the whole thing is there again.

[But there is hope]. If you are powerful enough, you can divide your consciousness into twenty parts all at the same time. I am changing my psychology. Mind grows. That is what the Yogis say. There is one passion and it rouses another, and the first one dies. If you are angry, and then happy, the next moment the anger passes away. Out of that anger you have manufactured the next state. These states are always interchangeable. Eternal happiness and misery are a child's dream. The Upanishads point out that the goal of man is neither misery nor happiness, but we have to be master of that out of which these are manufactured. We must be masters of the situation at its very root, as it were.

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[1] Gita, III. 33.

The other point of divergence is: the Upanishads condemn all rituals, especially those that involve the killing of animals. They declare those all nonsense. One school of old philosophers says that you must kill such an animal at a certain time if the effect is to be produced. [You may reply], "But [there is] also the sin of taking the life of the animal; you will have to suffer for that." They say that is all nonsense. How do you know what is right and what is wrong? Your mind says so? Who cares what your mind says? What nonsense are you talking? You are setting your mind against the scriptures. If your mind says something and the Vedas say something else, stop your mind and believe in the Vedas. If they say, killing a man is right, that is right. If you say, "No, my conscience says [otherwise," it won't do]. The moment you believe in any book as the eternal word, as sacred, no more can you question. I do not see how you people here believe in the Bible whenever you say about [it], "How wonderful those words are, how right and how good!" Because, if you believe in the Bible as the word of God, you have no right to judge at all. The moment you judge, you think you are higher than the Bible. [Then] what is the use of the Bible to you? The priests say, "We refuse to make the comparison with your Bible or anybody. It is no use comparing, because—what is the authority? There it ends. If you think something is not right, go and get it right according to the Vedas."

The Upanishads believe in that, [but they have a higher standard too]. On the one hand, they do not want to overthrow the Vedas, and on the other they see these animal sacrifices and the priests stealing everybody's money. But in the psychology they are all alike. All the differences have been in the philosophy, [regarding] the nature of the soul. Has it a body and a mind? And is the mind only a bundle of nerves, the motor nerves and the sensory nerves? Psychology, they all take for granted, is a perfect science. There cannot be any difference there. All the fight has been regarding philosophy—the nature of the soul, and God, and all that.

Then another great difference between the priests and the Upanishads. The Upanishads say, renounce. That is the test of everything. Renounce everything. It is the creative faculty that brings us into all this entanglement. The mind is in its own nature when it is calm. The moment you can calm it, that [very] moment you will know the truth. What is it that is whirling the mind ? Imagination, creative activity. Stop creation and you know the truth. All power of creation must stop, and then you know the truth at once.

On the other hand, the priests are all for [creation]. Imagine a species of life [in which there is no creative activity. It is unthinkable]. The people had to have a plan [of evolving a stable society. A system of rigid selection was adopted. For instance,] no people who are blind and halt can be married. [As a result] you will find so much less deformity [in India] than in any other country in the world. Epileptics and insane [people] are very rare [there]. That is owing to direct selection. The priests say, "Let them become Sannyasins." On the other hand, the Upanishads say, "Oh no, [the] earth's best and finest [and] freshest flowers should be laid upon the altar. The strong, the young, with sound intellect and sound body—they must struggle for the truth."

So with all these divergences of opinion, I have told you that the priests already have differentiated themselves into a separate caste. The second is the caste of the kings. . . . All the Upanishadic philosophy is from the brains of kings, not priests. There [runs] an economic struggle through every religious struggle. This animal called man has some religious influence, but he is guided by economy. Individuals are guided by something else, but the mass of mankind never made a move unless economy was [involved]. You may [preach a religion that may not be perfect in every detail], but if there is an economic background [to it], and you have the most [ardent champions] to preach it, you can convince a whole country. . . .

Whenever any religion succeeds, it must have economic value. Thousands of similar sects will be struggling for power, but only those who meet the real economic problem will have it. Man is guided by the stomach. He walks and the stomach goes first and the head afterwards. Have you not seen that? It will take ages for the head to go first. By the time a man is sixty years of age, he is called out of [the world]. The whole of life is one delusion, and just when you begin to see things the way they are, you are snatched off. So long as the stomach went first you were all right. When children's dreams begin to vanish and you begin to look at things the way they are, the head goes. Just when the head goes first, [you go out].

[For] the religion of the Upanishads to be popularised was a hard task. Very little economy is there, but tremendous altruism. . . .

The Upanishads had very little kingdom, although they were discovered by kings that held all the royal power in their hands. So the struggle . . . began to be fiercer. Its culminating point came two thousand years after, in Buddhism. The seed of Buddhism is here, [in] the ordinary struggle between the king and the priest; and [in the struggle] all religion declined. One wanted to sacrifice religion, the other wanted to cling to the sacrifices, to Vedic gods, etc. Buddhism . . . broke the chains of the masses. All castes and creeds alike became equal in a minute. So the great religious ideas in India exist, but have yet to be preached: otherwise they do no good. . . .

In every country it is the priest who is conservative, for two reasons—because it is his bread and because he can only move with the people. All priests are not strong. If the people say, "Preach two thousand gods", the priests will do it. They are the servants of the congregation who pay them. God does not pay them. So blame yourselves before blaming the priests. You can only get the government and the religion and the priesthood you deserve, and no better.

So the great struggle began in India and it comes to one of its culminating points in the Gita. When it was causing fear that all India was going to be broken up between [the] two . . . [groups], there rose this man Krishna, and in the Gita he tries to reconcile the ceremony and the philosophy of the priests and the people. Krishna is loved and worshipped in the same way as you do Christ. The difference is only in the age. The Hindus keep the birthday of Krishna as you do Christ's. Krishna lived five thousand years ago and his life is full of miracles, some of them very similar to those in the life of Christ. The child was born in prison. The father took him away and put him with the shepherds. All children born in that year were ordered to be killed. . . . He was killed; that was his fate.

Krishna was a married man. There are thousands of books about him. They do not interest me much. The Hindus are great in telling stories, you see. [If] the Christian missionaries tell one story from their Bible, the Hindus will produce twenty stories. You say the whale swallowed Jonah; the Hindus say someone swallowed an elephant. . . . Since I was a child I have heard about Krishna's life. I take it for granted there must have been a man called Krishna, and his Gita shows he has [left] a wonderful book. I told you, you can understand the character of a man by analysing the fables about him. The fables have the nature [of decorations]. You must find they are all polished and manipulated to fit into the character. For instance, take Buddha. The central idea [is] sacrifice. There are thousands of folklore, but in every case the sacrifice must have been kept up. There are thousands of stories about Lincoln, about some characteristics of that great man. You take all the fables and find the general idea and [know] that that was the central character of the man. You find in Krishna that non-attachment is the central idea. He does not need anything. He does not want anything. He works for work's sake. "Work for work's sake. Worship for worship's sake. Do good because it is good to do good. Ask no more." That must have been the character of the man. Otherwise these fables could not be brought down to the one idea of non-attachment. the Gita is not his only sermon. . . .

He is the most rounded man I know of, wonderfully developed equally in brain and heart and hand. Every moment [of his] is alive with activity, either as a gentleman, warrior, minister, or something else. Great as a gentleman, as a scholar, as a poet. This all-rounded and wonderful activity and combination of brain and heart you see in the Gita and other books. Most wonderful heart, exquisite language, and nothing can approach it anywhere. This tremendous activity of the man—the impression is still there. Five thousand years have passed and he has influenced millions and millions. Just think what an influence this man has over the whole world, whether you know it or not. My regard for him is for his perfect sanity. No cobwebs in that brain, no superstition. He knows the use of everything, and when it is necessary to [assign a place to each], he is there. Those that talk, go everywhere, question about the mystery of the Vedas, etc., they do not know the truth. They are no better than frauds. There is a place in the Vedas [even] for superstition, for ignorance. The whole secret is to find out the proper place for everything.

Then that heart! He is the first man, way before Buddha, to open the door of religion to every caste. That wonderful mind! That tremendously active life! Buddha's activity was on one plane, the plane of teaching. He could not keep his wife and child and become a teacher at the same time. Krishna preached in the midst of the battle-field. "He who in the midst of intense activity finds himself in the greatest calmness, and in the greatest peace finds intense activity, that is the greatest [Yogi as well as the wisest man]."[1] It means nothing to this man—the flying of missiles about him. Calm and sedate he goes on discussing the problems of life and death. Each one of the prophets is the best commentary on his own teaching. If you want to know what is meant by the doctrine of the New Testament, you go to Mr. So-and-so. [But] read again and again [the four Gospels and try to understand their import in the light of the wonderful life of the Master as depicted there.] The great men think, and you and I [also] think. But there is a difference. We think and our bodies do not follow. Our actions do not harmonise with our thoughts. Our words have not the power of the words that become Vedas. . . . Whatever they think must be accomplished. If they say, "I do this", the body does it. Perfect obedience. This is the end. You can think yourself God in one minute, but you cannot be [God.] That is the difficulty. They become what they think. We will become [only] by [degrees].

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[1] Gita, IV. 18.

You see, that was about Krishna and his time. In the next lecture we will know more of his book.

(*Complete Works*, I. 446-58)

THE GITA II

(Delivered in San Francisco, on May 28, 1900)

The Gita requires a little preliminary introduction. The scene is laid on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. There were two branches of the same race fighting for the empire of India about five thousand years ago. The Pandavas had the right, but the Kauravas had the might. The Pandavas were five brothers, and they were living in a forest. Krishna was the friend of the Pandavas. The Kauravas would not grant them as much land as would cover the point of a needle.

The opening scene is the battle-field, and both sides see their relatives and friends—one brother on one side and another on the other side ; a grandfather on one side, a grandson on the other side. . . . When Arjuna sees his own friends and relatives on the other side and knows that he may have to kill them, his heart gives way and he says that he will not fight. Thus begins the Gita.

For all of us in this world, life is a continuous fight. . . . Many a time comes comes when we want to interpret our weakness and cowardice as forgiveness and renunciation. There is no merit in the renunciation of a beggar. If a person, who can [give a blow], forbears, there is merit in that. If a person, who has, gives up, there is merit in that. We know how often in our lives through laziness and cowardice we give up the battle and try to hypnotise our minds into the belief that we are brave.

The Gita opens with this very significant verse: "Arise, O prince! Give up this faint-heartedness, this weakness! Stand up and fight!"[1] Then Arjuna, trying to argue the matter [with Krishna], brings higher moral ideas, how non-resistance is better than resistance, and so on. He is trying to justify himself, but he cannot fool Krishna. Krishna is the higher Self, or God. He sees through the argument at once. In this case [the motive] is weakness. Arjuna sees his own relatives and he cannot strike them. . . .

There is a conflict in Arjuna's heart between his emotionalism and his duty. The nearer we are to [beasts and] birds, the more we are in the hells of emotion. We call it love. It is self-hypnotisation. We are under the control of our [emotions] like animals. A cow can sacrifice its life for its young. Every animal can. What of that ? It is not the blind, birdlike emotion that leads to perfection. . . . [To reach] the eternal consciousness, that is the goal of man! There emotion has no place, nor sentimentalism, nor anything that belongs to the senses—only the light of pure reason. [There] man stands as spirit.

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[1] Gita, II. 3.

Now, Arjuna is under the control of this emotionalism. He is not what he should be—a great self-controlled, enlightened sage working through the eternal light of reason. He has become like an animal, like a baby, just letting his heart carry away his brain, making a fool of himself and trying to cover his weakness with the flowery names of "love" and so on. Krishna sees through that. Arjuna talks like a man of a little learning and brings out many reasons, but at the same time he talks the language of a fool.

The sage is not sorry for those that are living, nor for those that die.[1] [Krishna says:] "You cannot die nor can I. There was never a time when we did not exist. There will never be a time when we shall not exist. As in this life a man begins with childhood, and [passes through youth and old age, so at death he merely passes into another kind of body]. Why should a wise man be sorry?"[2] And where is the beginning of this emotionalism that has got hold of you? It is in the senses. "It is the touch of the senses that brings all this quality of existence: heat and cold, pleasure and pain. They come and go."[1] Man is miserable this moment, happy the next. As such he cannot experience the nature of the soul. . . .

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[1] Gita, II. 11.

[2] Gita, II. 13.

"Existence can never be non-existence, neither can non-existence ever become existence. . . . Know, therefore, that that which pervades all this universe is without beginning or end. It is unchangeable. There is nothing in the universe that can change [the Changeless]. Though this body has its beginning and end, the dweller in the body is infinite and without end."[2]

Knowing this, stand up and fight! Not one step back, that is the idea. . . . Fight it out, whatever comes. Let the stars move from the spheres! Let the whole world stand against us! Death means only a change of garment. What of it? Thus fight! You gain nothing by becoming cowards. . . .Taking a step backward, you do not avoid any misfortune. You have cried to all the gods in the world. Has misery ceased? The masses in India cry to sixty million gods, and still die like dogs. Where are these gods? . . . The gods come to help you when

[1] Ibid., 14.
[2] Ibid., 16-18.

you have succeeded. So what is the use ? Die game. . . . This bending the knee to superstitions, this selling yourself to your own mind does not befit you, my soul. You are infinite, deathless, birthless. Because you are infinite spirit, it does not befit you to be a slave. . . . Arise! Awake! Stand up and fight! Die if you must. There is none to help you. You are all the world. Who can help you ?

"Beings are unknown to our human senses before birth and after death. It is only in the interim that they are manifest. What is there to grieve about ?[1]

"Some look at It [the Self] with wonder. Some talk of It as wonderful. Others hear of It as wonderful. Others, hearing of It, do not understand."[2]

But if you say that killing all these people is sinful, then consider this from the standpoint of your own caste-duty. . . . "Making pleasure and misery the same, making success and defeat the same, do thou stand up and fight!"[3]

This is the beginning of another peculiar doctrine of the Gita—the doctrine of non-attachment. That is to say, we have to bear the result of our own actions because we attached ourselves to them. . . . "Only what is done as duty for duty's sake . . . can scatter the bondage of Karma."[1] There is no danger that you can overdo it. . . . "If you do even a little of it, [this Yoga will save you from the terrible round of birth and death].[2]

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[1] Gita, II. 28.
[2] Ibid., 29.
[3] Ibid., 38.

"Know, Arjuna, the mind that succeeds is the mind that is concentrated. The minds that are taken up with two thousand subjects [have] their energies dispersed. Some can talk flowery language and think there is nothing beyond the Vedas. They want to go to heaven. They want good things through the power of the Vedas, and so they make sacrifices."[3] Such will never attain any success [in spiritual life] unless they give up all these materialistic ideas.[4]

That is another great lesson. Spirituality can never be attained unless all material ideas are given up. . . . What is in the senses ? The senses are all delusion. People wish to retain them [in heaven] even after they are dead—a pair of eyes, a nose. Some imagine they will have more organs than they have now. They want to see God sitting on a throne through all eternity—the material body of God. . . . Such men's desires

[1] Ibid., 39.
[2] Ibid., 40.
[3] Ibid., 41-43.
[4] Ibid., 44.

are for the body, for food and drink and enjoyment. It is the materialistic life prolonged. Men cannot think of anything beyond this life. This life is all for the body. "Such a man never comes to that concentration which leads to freedom."[1]

"The Vedas only teach things belonging to the three Gunas, to Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas."[2] The Vedas only teach about things in nature. People cannot think anything they do not see on earth. If they talk about heaven, they think of a king sitting on a throne, of people burning incense. It is all nature, nothing beyond nature. The Vedas, therefore, teach nothing but nature. "Go beyond nature, beyond the dualities of existence, beyond your own consciousness, caring for nothing, neither for good nor for evil"[3]

We have identified ourselves with our bodies. We are only body, or rather, possessed of a body. If I am pinched, I cry. All this is nonsense, since I am the soul. All this chain of misery, imagination, animals, gods, and demons, everything, the whole world—all this comes from the identification of ourselves with the body. I am spirit. Why do I jump if you pinch me ?. . . Look at the slavery of it. Are you not

[1] Gita, II. 44.

[2] Ibid., 45.

[3] Ibid., 45.

ashamed? We are religious! We are philosophers! We are sages! Lord bless us! What are we? Living hells, that is what we are. Lunatics, that is what we are!

We cannot give up the idea [of body]. We are earth-bound. . . . Our ideas are burial grounds. When we leave the body we are bound by thousands of elements to those [ideas].

Who can work without any attachment? That is the real question. Such a man is the same whether his work succeeds or fails. His heart does not give one false beat even if his whole life-work is burnt to ashes in a moment. "This is the sage who always works for work's sake without caring for the results. Thus he goes beyond the pain of birth and death. Thus he becomes free."[1] Then he sees that this attachment is all delusion. The Self can never be attached. . . . Then he goes beyond all the scriptures and philosophies.[2] If the mind is deluded and pulled into a whirlpool by books and scriptures, what is the good of all these scriptures? One says this, another says that. What book shall you take? Stand alone! See the glory of your own soul, and see that you will have to work. Then you will become a man of firm will.[3]

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[1] Gita, II. 51.

[2] Ibid., 52.

[3] Ibid., 53.

Arjuna asks: "Who is a person of established will ?"[1]

[Krishna answers:] "The man who has given up all desires, who desires nothing, not even this life, nor freedom, nor gods, nor work, nor anything. When he has become perfectly satisfied, he has no more cravings."[2] He has seen the glory of the Self and has found that the world, and the gods, and heaven are . . . within his own Self. Then the gods become no gods; death becomes no death; life becomes no life. Everything has changed. "A man is said to be [illumined] if his will has become firm, if his mind is not disturbed by misery, if he does not desire any happiness, if he is free of all [attachment], of all fear, of all anger. . . .[3]

"As the tortoise can draw in his legs, and if you strike him, not one foot comes out, even so the sage can draw all his sense-organs inside,"[4] and nothing can force them out. Nothing can shake him, no temptation or anything. Let the universe tumble about him, it does not make one single ripple in his mind.

Then comes a very important question.

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[1] Ibid., 54.

[2] Ibid., 55.

[3] Ibid., 56.

[4] Gita, II. 58.

Sometimes people fast for days. . . .When the worst man has fasted for twenty days, he becomes quite gentle. Fasting and torturing themselves have been practised by people all over the world. Krishna's idea is that this is all nonsense. He says that the senses will for the moment recede from the man who tortures himself, but will emerge again with twenty times more [power]. . . . What should you do ? The idea is to be natural—no asceticism. Go on, work, only mind that you are not attached. The will can never be fixed strongly in the man who has not learnt and practised the secret of non-attachment.

I go out and open my eyes. If something is there, I must see it. I cannot help it. The mind runs after the senses. Now the senses must give up any reaction to nature.

"Where it is dark night for the [sense-bound] world, the self-controlled [man] is awake. It is daylight for him. . . . And where the world is awake, the sage sleeps." Where is the world awake ? In the senses. People want to eat and drink and have children, and then they die a dog's death. . . . They are always awake for the senses. Even their religion is just for that. They invent a God to help them, to give them more women, more money, more children—never a God to help them become more godlike!

"Where the whole world is awake, the sage sleeps. But where the ignorant are asleep, there the sage keeps awake"[1]—in the world of light where man looks upon himself not as a bird, not as an animal, not as a body, but as infinite spirit, deathless, immortal. There, where the ignorant are asleep, and do not have time, nor intellect, nor power to understand, there the sage is awake. That is daylight for him.

"As all the rivers of the world constantly pour their waters into the ocean, but the ocean's grand, majestic nature remains undisturbed and unchanged, so even though all the senses bring in sensations from nature, the ocean-like heart of the sage knows no disturbance, knows no fear."[2] Let miseries come in millions of rivers and happiness in hundreds! I am no slave to misery! I am no slave to happiness!

(*Complete Works*, I. 459-66)

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[1] Gita, II. 69.
[2] Gita, II. 70.

THE GITA III

(Delivered in San Francisco, on May 29, 1900)

Arjuna asks: "You just advised action, and yet you uphold knowledge of Brahman as the highest form of life. Krishna, if you think that knowledge is better than action, why do you tell me to act?"[1]

[Shri Krishna]: "From ancient times these two systems have come down to us. The Sankhya philosophers advance the theory of knowledge. The Yogis advance the theory of work. But none can attain to peace by renouncing actions. None in this life can stop activity even for a moment. Nature's qualities [Gunas] will make him act. He who stops his activities and at the same time is still thinking about them attains to nothing; he only becomes a hypocrite. But he who by the power of his mind gradually brings his sense-organs under control, employing them in work, that man is better. Therefore do thou work. . . .[2]

"Even if you have known the secret that you have no duty, that you are free, still you have to work for the good of others. Because whatever a great man does, ordinary people will do also.[1] If a great man who has attained peace of mind and freedom ceases to work, then all the rest without that knowledge and peace will try to imitate him, and thus confusion would arise.[2]

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[1] Gita, III. 1.

[2] Ibid., 2-8.

"Behold, Arjuna, there is nothing that I do not possess and nothing that I want to acquire. And yet I continue to work. If I stopped work for a moment, the whole universe would [be destroyed].[3] That which the ignorant do with desire for results and gain, let the wise do without any attachment and without any desire for results and gain."[4]

Even if you have knowledge, do not disturb the childlike faith of the ignorant. On the other hand, go down to their level and gradually bring them up.[5] That is a very powerful idea, and it has become the ideal in India. That is why you can see a great philosopher going into a temple and worshipping images. It is not hypocrisy.

Later on we read what Krishna says, "Even those who worship other deities are really worshipping me."[6] It is God incarnate whom man is worshipping. Would God be angry if you called Him by the wrong name? He would be no God at all! Can't you understand that whatever a man has in his own heart is God—even if he worships a stone? What of that!

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[1] Gita, III. 20-21.
[2] Ibid., 22-24.
[3] Ibid., 22-24.
[4] Ibid., 25.
[5] Ibid., 26, 29.
[6] Gita, IX. 23.

We will understand more clearly if we once get rid of the idea that religion consists in doctrines. One idea of religion has been that the whole world was born because Adam ate the apple, and there is no way of escape. Believe in Jesus Christ—in a certain man's death! But in India there is quite a different idea. [There] religion means realisation, nothing else. It does not matter whether one approaches the destination in a carriage with four horses, in an electric car, or rolling on the ground. The goal is the same. For the [Christians] the problem is how to escape the wrath of the terrible God. For the Indians it is how to become what they really are, to regain their lost Selfhood. . . .

Have you realised that you are spirit? When you say, "I do", what is meant by that? This lump of flesh called the body—or the spirit, the infinite, ever blessed, effulgent, immortal? You may be the greatest philosopher, but as long as you have the idea that you are the body, you are no better than the little worm crawling under your foot! No excuse for you! So much the worse for you, that you know all the philosophies and at the same time think you are the body! Body-gods, that is what you are! Is that religion?

Religion is the realisation of spirit as spirit. What are we doing now? Just the opposite, realising spirit as matter. Out of the immortal God we manufacture death and matter, and out of dead dull matter we manufacture spirit. . . .

If you [can realise Brahman] by standing on your head or on one foot or by worshipping five thousand gods with three heads each—welcome to it! . . . Do it any way you can! Nobody has any right to say anything. Therefore, Krishna says, if your method is better and higher, you have no business to say that another man's method is bad, however wicked you may think it.

Again, we must consider, religion is a [matter of] growth, not a mass of foolish words. Two thousand years ago a man saw God. Moses saw God in a burning bush. Does what Moses did when he saw God save you? No man's seeing God can help you the least bit except that it may excite you and urge you to do the same thing. That is the whole value of the ancients' examples. Nothing more. [Just] signposts on the way. No man's eating can satisfy another man. No man's seeing God can save another man. You have to see God yourself. All these people fighting about what God's nature is—whether He has three heads in one body or five heads in six bodies. Have you seen God? No. . . . And they do not believe they can ever see Him. What fools we mortals be! Sure. Lunatics!

[In India] it has come down as a tradition that if there is a God, He must be your God and my God. To whom does the sun belong! You say Uncle Sam is everybody's uncle. If there is a God, you ought to be able to see Him. If not, let Him go.

Each one thinks his method is best. Very good. But remember, it may be good for *you*. One food which is very indigestible to one is very digestible to another. Because it is good for you, do not jump to the conclusion that your method is everybody's method, that Jack's coat fits John and Mary. All the uneducated, uncultured, unthinking men and women have been put into that sort of strait jacket! Think for yourselves. Become atheists! Become materialists! That would be better. Exercise the mind! . . . What right have you to say that this man's method is wrong? It may be wrong for you. That is to say, if you undertake the method, you will be degraded; but that does not mean that he will be degraded. Therefore, says Krishna, if you have knowledge and see a man weak, do not condemn him. Go to his level and help him if you can. He must grow. I can put five bucketfuls of knowledge into his head in five hours. But what good will it do? He will be a little worse than before.

Whence comes all this bondage of action? Because we chain the soul with action. According to our Indian system, there are two existences: nature on the one side and the Self, the Atman, on the other. By the word nature is meant not only all this external world, but also our bodies, the mind, the will, even down to what says "I". Beyond all that is the infinite life and light of the soul—the Self, the Atman. . . . According to this philosophy, the Self is entirely separate from nature, always was and always will be. . . . There never was a time when the spirit could be identified even with the mind. . . .

. It is self-evident that the food you eat is manufacturing the mind all the time. It is matter. The Self is above any connection with food. Whether you eat or not does not matter. Whether you think or not . . . does not matter. It is infinite light. Its light is the same always. If you put a blue or a green glass [before a light], what has that to do with the light? Its colour is unchangeable. It is the mind which changes and gives the different colours. The moment the spirit leaves the body, the whole thing goes to pieces.

The reality in nature is spirit. Reality itself—the light of the spirit—moves and speaks and does everything [through our bodies, minds, etc.] It is the energy and soul and life of the spirit that is being worked upon in different ways by matter. . . . The spirit is the cause of all our thoughts and body-action and everything, but it is untouched by good or evil, pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and all the dualism of nature, although it lends its light to everything.

"Therefore, Arjuna, all these actions are in nature. Nature . . . is working out her own laws in our bodies and minds. We identify ourselves with nature and say, 'I am doing this'. This way delusion seizes us."[1]

We always act under some compulsion. When hunger compels me, I eat. And suffering is still worse slavery. The real "I" is eternally free. What can compel it to do anything? The sufferer is in nature. It is only when we identify ourselves with the body that we say, "I am suffering; I am Mr. So-and-so"—all such nonsense. But he who has known the truth, holds himself aloof. Whatever his body does, whatever his mind does, he does not care. But mind you, the vast majority of mankind are under this delusion; and whenever they do any good, they feel that they are [the doers]. They are not yet able to understand higher philosophy. Do not disturb their faith! They are shunning evil and doing good. Great idea! Let them have it! . . . They are workers for good. By degrees they will think that there is greater glory than that of doing good. They will only witness, and things are done. . . . Gradually they will understand. When they shunned all evil and done all good, then they will begin to realise that they are beyond all nature. They are not the doers. They stand [apart]. They are the. . . witness. They simply stand and look. Nature is begetting all the universe. . . . They turn their backs. "In the beginning, O beloved, there only existed that Existence. Nothing else existed. And That [brooding], everything else was created."[1]

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[1] Gita, III. 27.

"Even those who know the path act impelled by their own nature. Everyone acts according to his nature. He cannot transcend it."[2] The atom cannot disobey the law. Whether it is the mental or the physical atom, it must obey the law. "What is the use of [external restraint] ?"[1]

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[1] Chhandogya, VI. ii. 2-3.

[2] Gita· III. 33.

What makes the value of anything in life? Not enjoyment, not possessions. Analyse everything. You will find there is no value except in experience, to teach us something. And in many cases it is our hardships that give us better experience than enjoyment. Many times blows give us better experience than the caresses of nature. . . . Even famine has its place and value . . . .

According to Krishna, we are not new beings just come into existence. Our minds are not new minds. . . . In modern times we all know that every child brings [with him] all the past, not only of humanity, but of the plant life. There are all the past chapters, and this present chapter, and there are a whole lot of future chapters before him. Everyone has his path mapped and sketched and planned out for him. And in spite of all this darkness, there cannot be anything uncaused—no event, no circumstance. . . . It is simply our ignorance. The whole infinite chain of causation . . . is bound one link to another back to nature. The whole universe is bound by that sort of chain. It is the universal [chain of] cause and effect, you receiving one link, one part, I another. . . . And that [part] is our own nature.

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[1] Gita, III. 33.

Now Shri Krishna says: "Better die in your own path than attempt the path of another."[1] This is my path, and I am down here. And you are way up there, and I am always tempted to give up my path thinking I will go there and be with you. And if I go up, I am neither there nor here. We must not lose sight of this doctrine. It is all [a matter of] growth. Wait and grow, and you attain everything; otherwise there will be [great spiritual danger]. Here is the fundamental secret of teaching religion.

What do you mean by "saving people" and all believing in the same doctrine? It cannot be. There are the general ideas that can be taught to mankind. The true teacher will be able to find out for you what your own nature is. Maybe you do not know it. It is possible that what you think is your own nature is all wrong. It has not developed to consciousness. The teacher is the person who ought to know. . . . He thought to know by a glance at your face and put you on [your path]. We grope about and struggle here and there and do all sorts of things and make no progress until the time comes when we fall into that life current and are carried on. The sign is that the moment we are in that stream we will float. Then there is no more struggle. This is to be found out.

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[1] Gita, III. 35.

Then die in that [path] rather than giving it up and taking hold of another.

Instead, we start a religion and make a set of dogmas and betray the goal of mankind and treat everyone [as having] the same nature. No two persons have the same mind or the same body. . . . No two persons have the same religion. . . .

If you want to be religious, enter not the gate of any organised religions. They do a hundred times more evil than good, because they stop the growth of each one's individual development. Study everything, but keep your own seat firm. If you take my advice, do not put your neck into the trap. The moment they try to put their noose on you, get your neck out and go somewhere else. [As] the bee culling honey from many flowers remains free, not bound by any flower, be not bound. . . . Enter not the door of any organised religions. [Religion] is only between you and your God, and no third person must come between you. Think what these organised religions have done! What Napoleon was more terrible than these religious persecutions? . . . If you and I organise, we begin to hate every person. It is better not to love, if loving only means hating others. That is no love. That is hell! If loving your own people means hating everybody else, it is the quintessence of selfishness and brutality, and the effect is that it will make you brutes. Therefore, better die working out your own natural religion than following another's natural religion, however great it may appear to you.[1]

"Beware, Arjuna, lust and anger are the great enemies. These are to be controlled. These cover the knowledge even of those [who are wise]. This fire of lust is unquenchable. Its location is in the sense-organs and in the mind. The Self desires nothing.[2]

"This Yoga I taught in ancient times [to Vivaswan; Vivaswan taught it to Manu]. . . . Thus it was that the knowledge descended from one king to another. But in time this great Yoga was destroyed. That is why I am telling it to you again today."[3]

Then Arjuna asks, "Why do you speak thus? You are a man born only the other day, and [Vivaswan was born long before you]. What do you mean that you taught him?"[4]

Then Krishna says, "O Arjuna, you and I have run the cycle of births and deaths many times, but you are not conscious of them all.

[1] Gita, III. 35.
[2] Ibid., III. 37, 40.
[3] Gita, IV. 1-3.
[4] Ibid., IV. 4.

I am without beginning, birthless, the absolute Lord of all creation. I through my own nature take form. Whenever virtue subsides and wickedness prevails, I come to help mankind. For the salvation of the good, for the destruction of wickedness, for the establishment of spirituality I come from time to time. Whosoever wants to reach me through whatsoever ways, I reach him through that. But know, Arjuna, none can ever swerve from my path."[1] None ever did. How can we? None swerves from His path.

. . . All societies are based upon bad generalisation. The law can only be formed upon perfect generalisation. What is the old saying: Every law has its exception?. . . If it is a law, it cannot be broken. None can break it. Does the apple break the law of gravitation? The moment a law is broken, no more universe exists. There will come a time when you will break the law, and that moment your consciousness, mind, and body will melt away.

There is a man stealing there. Why does he steal ? You punish him. Why can you not make room for him and put his energy to work ? . . . You say, "You are a sinner," and many will say he has broken the law. All this herd of mankind is forced [into uniformity] and hence all this trouble, sin, and weakness. . . . The world is not as bad as you think. It is we fools who have made it evil. We manufacture our own ghosts and demons, and then. . . We cannot get rid of them. We put our hands before our eyes and cry: "Somebody, give us light!" Fools! Take your hands from your eyes! That is all there is to it. . . . We call upon the gods to save us and nobody blames himself. That is the pity of it. Why is there so much evil in society? What is it they say? Flesh and the devil and the woman. Why make these things [up]? Nobody asks you to make them [up]. "None, O Arjuna. can swerve from my path."[1] We are fools, and our paths are foolish. We have to go through all this Maya. God made the heaven, and man made the hell for himself.

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[1] Gita, IV. 5-8, 11.

"No action can touch me. I have no desire for the results of action. Whosoever knows me thus knows the secret and is not bound by action. The ancient sages, knowing this secret [could safely engage in action]. Do thou work in the same fashion.[2]

"He who sees in the midst of intense activity, intense calm, and in the midst of intensest peace is intensely active [is wise indeed]."[3] . . . This is the question: With every sense and every organ active, have you that tremendous peace [so that] nothing can disturb you? Standing on Market Street, waiting for the car with all the rush . . . going on around you, are you in meditation—calm and peaceful? In the cave, are you intensely active there with all quiet about you? If you are, you are a Yogi, otherwise not.

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[1] Gita, IV. 11.

[2] Ibid., 14-15.

[3] Ibid., 18.

"[The seers call him wise] whose every attempt is free, without any desire for gain, without any selfishness."[1] Truth can never come to us as long as we are selfish. We colour everything with our own selves. Things come to us as they are. Not that they are hidden, not at all! *We* hide them. We have the brush. A thing comes, and we do not like it, and we brush a little and then look at it. . . . We do not want to know. We paint everything with ourselves. In all action the motive power is selfishness. Everything is hidden by ourselves. We are like the caterpillar which takes the thread out of his own body and of that makes the cocoon, and behold, he is caught. By his own work he imprisons himself. That is what we are doing. The moment I say "me" the thread makes a turn. "I and mine," another turn. So it goes. . . .

We cannot remain without action for a

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[1] Gita, IV. 19.

moment. Act! But just as when your neighbour asks you, "Come and help me!" have exactly the same idea when you are helping yourself. No more. Your body is of no more value than that of John. Don't do anything more for your body than you do for John. That is religion.

"He whose efforts are bereft of all desire and selfishness has burnt all this bondage of action with the fire of knowledge. He is wise."[1] Reading books cannot do that. The ass can be burdened with the whole library; that does not make him learned at all. What is the use of reading many books? "Giving up all attachment to work, always satisfied, not hoping for gain, the wise man acts and is beyond action."[2]. . .

Naked I came out of my mother's womb and naked I return. Helpless I came and helpless I go. Helpless I am now. And we do not know [the goal]. It is terrible for us to think about it. We get such odd ideas! We go to a medium and see if the ghost can help us. Think of the weakness! Ghosts, devils, gods, anybody—come on! And all the priests, all the charlatans! That is just the time they get hold of us, the moment we are weak. Then they bring in all the gods.

I see in my country a man becomes strong, educated, becomes a philosopher, and says, "All this praying and bathing is nonsense." . . . The man's father dies, and his mother dies. That is the most terrible shock a Hindu can have. You will find him bathing in every dirty pool, going into the temple, licking the dust. . . . Help, anyone! But we are helpless. There is no help from anyone. That is the truth. There have been more gods than human beings; and yet no help. We die like dogs—no help. Everywhere beastliness, famine, disease, misery, evil! And all are crying for help. But no help. And yet, hoping against hope, we are still screaming for help. Oh, the miserable condition! Oh, the terror of it! Look into your own heart! One half of [the trouble] is not our fault, but the fault of our parents. Born with this weakness, more and more of it was put into our heads. Step by step we go beyond it.

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[1] Gita, IV. 19.

[2] Ibid., 20.

It is a tremendous error to feel helpless. Do not seek help from anyone. We are our own help. If we cannot help ourselves there is none to help us. . . . "Thou thyself art thy only friend, thou thyself thy only enemy. There is no other enemy but this self of mine, no other friend but myself."[1] This is the last and greatest lesson, and Oh, what a time it takes to learn it! We seem to get hold of it, and the next moment the old wave comes. The backbone breaks. We weaken and again grasp for that superstition and help. Just think of that huge mass of misery, and all caused by this false idea of going to seek for help.

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[1] Gita, VI. 5.

Possibly the priest says his routine words and expects something. Sixty thousand people look to the skies and pray and pay the priest. Month after month they still look, still pay and pray. . . . Think of that! Is it not lunacy ? What else is it ? Who is responsible ? You may preach religion, but to excite the minds of undeveloped children. . . ! You will have to suffer for that. In your heart of hearts, what are you ? For every weakening thought you have put into anybody's head you will have to pay with compound interest. The law of Karma must have its pound of flesh. . . .

There is only one sin. That is weakness. When I was a boy I read Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The only good man I had any respect for was Satan. The only saint is that soul that never weakens, faces everything, and determines to die game.

Stand up and die game! . . . Do not add one lunacy to another. Do not add your weakness to the evil that is going to come. That is all I have to say to the world. Be strong! . . . You talk of ghosts and devils. We are the living devils. The sign of life is strength and growth. The sign of death is weakness. Whatever is weak, avoid! It is death. If it is strength, go down into hell and get hold of it! There is salvation only for the brave. "None but the brave deserves the fair." None but the bravest deserves salvation. Whose hell ? Whose torture? Whose sin ? Whose weakness ? Whose death ? Whose disease ?

You believe in God. If you do, believe in the real God. "Thou art the man, thou the woman, thou the young man walking in the strength of youth . . . thou the old man tottering with his stick."[1] Thou art weakness. Thou art fear. Thou art heaven, and thou art hell. Thou art the serpent that would sting. Come thou as fear! Come thou as death! Come thou as misery! . . .

All weakness, all bondage is imagination. Speak one word to it, it must vanish. Do not weaken! There is no other way out. . . . Stand up and be strong! No fear. No superstition. Face the truth as it is! If death comes—that is the worst of our miseries—let it come! we are determined to die game. That is all the religion I know. I have not attained to it, but I am struggling to do it. I may not, but you may. Go on!

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[1] Shvetashvatara. IV. 3.

"Where one sees another, one hears another, so long as there are two," there must be fear, and fear is the mother of all [misery]. Where none sees another, where it is all One, there is none to be miserable, none to be unhappy.[1] [There is only] the One without a second. Therefore be not afraid. Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached!

(*Complete Works*, I. 467-80)

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[1] Chhandogya, VII. xxiii-xxiv (adapted).

WORK WITHOUT MOTIVE

When the Gita was first preached, there was then going on a great controversy between two sects. One party considered the Vedic Yajnas and animal sacrifices and suchlike Karmas to constitute the whole of religion. The other preached that the killing of numberless horses and cattle cannot be called religion. The people belonging to the latter party were mostly Sannyasins and followers of Jnana. They believed that the giving up of all work and the gaining of the knowledge of the Self was the only path to Moksha. By the preaching of His great doctrine of work without motive, the author of the Gita set at rest the disputes of these two antagonistic sects.

Many are of opinion that the Gita was not written at the time of the Mahabharata, but was subsequently added to it. This is not correct. The special teachings of the Gita are to be found in every part of the Mahabharata, and if the Gita is to be expunged, as forming no part of it, every other portion of it which embodies the same teachings should be similarly treated.

Now, what is the meaning of working without motive ? Nowadays many understand it in the sense that one is to work in such a way that neither pleasure nor pain touches his mind. If this be its real meaning, then the animals might be said to work without motive. Some animals devour their own offspring, and they do not feel any pangs at all in doing so. Robbers ruin other people by robbing them of their possessions, but if they feel quite callous to pleasure or pain, then they also would be working without motive. If the meaning of it be such, then one who has a stony heart, the worst of criminals, might be considered to be working without motive. The walls have no feelings of pleasure or pain, neither has a stone, and it cannot be said that they are working without motive. In the above sense the doctrine is a potent instrument in the hands of the wicked. They would go on doing wicked deeds, and would pronounce themselves as working without a motive. If such be the significance of working without a motive, then a fearful doctrine has been put forth by the preaching of the Gita. Certainly this is not the meaning. Furthermore, if we look into the lives of those who were connected with the preaching of the Gita, we should find them living quite a different life. Arjuna killed Bhishma and Drona in battle, but withal, he sacrificed all his self-interest and desires and his lower self millions of times.

Gita teaches Karma-Yoga. We should work through Yoga (concentration). In such concentration in action (Karma-Yoga), there is no consciousness of the lower ego present. The consciousness that I am doing this and that is never present when one works through Yoga. The Western people do not understand this. They say that if there be no consciousness of ego, if this ego is gone, how then can a man work ? But when one works with concentration, losing all consciousness of oneself, the work that is done will be infinitely better, and this every one may have experienced in his own life. We perform many works subconsciously, such as the digestion of food etc., many others consciously, and others again by becoming immersed in Samadhi as it were, when there is no consciousness of the smaller ego. If the painter, losing the consciousness of his ego, becomes completely immersed in his painting, he will be able to produce masterpieces. The good cook concentrates his whole self on the food-material he handles ; he loses all other consciousness for the time being. But they are only able to do perfectly a single work in this way, to which they are habituated. The Gita teaches that all works should be done thus. He who is one with the Lord through Yoga performs all his works by becoming immersed in concentration, and does not seek any personal benefit. Such a performance of work brings only good to the world, no evil can come out of it. Those who work thus never do anything for themselves.

The result of every work is mixed with good and evil. There is no good work that has not a touch of evil in it. Like smoke round the fire, some evil always clings to work. We should engage in such works as bring the largest amount of good and the smallest measure of evil. Arjuna killed Bhisma and Drona; if this had not been done Duryodhana could not have been conquered, the force of evil would have triumphed over the force of good, and thus a great calamity would have fallen on the country. The government of the country would have been usurped by a body of proud unrighteous kings, to the great misfortune of the people. Similarly, Shri Krishna killed Kamsa, Jarasandha and others who were tyrants, but not a single one of his deeds was done for himself. Every one of them was for the good of others. We are reading the Gita by candle-light, but numbers of insects are being burnt to death. Thus it is seen that some evil clings to work. Those who work without any consciousness of their lower ego are not affected with evil, for they work for the good of the world. To work without motive, to work unattached, brings the highest bliss and freedom. This secret of Karma-Yoga is taught by the Lord Shri Krishna in the Gita.

(*Complete Works,* V. 246-49)

We read in the Bhagavad-Gita again and again that we must all work incessantly. All work is by nature composed of good and evil. We cannot do any work which will not do some good somewhere; there cannot be any work which will not cause some harm somewhere. Every work must necessarily be a mixture of good and evil; yet we are commanded to work incessantly. Good and evil will both have their results, will produce their Karma. Good action will entail upon us good effect; bad action, bad. But good and bad are both bondages of the soul. The solution reached in the Gita in regard to this bondage-producing nature of work is that if we do not attach ourselves to the work we do, it will not have any binding effect on our soul.

(*Complete Works,* I. 53)

This is the one cause of misery; we are attached; we are being caught. Therefore, says the Gita: Work constantly; work, but be not attached; be not caught. Reserve unto yourself the power of detaching yourself from everything, however beloved, however much the soul might yearn for it, however great the pangs of misery you feel if you are going to leave it; still reserve the power of leaving it whenever you want.

(Complete Works, II. 2-3)

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